

Testimony of Jeff Brown

April 13, 2023

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to present to you tonight.

My name is Jeff Brown and I am the principal of Roberto Clemente Middle School. I have had the opportunity to lead the RCMS community for the past 8 years and I am very proud of the students and community of Germantown.

During my 20 years of working for MCPS, I have served the communities of Poolesville, Damascus, Richard Montgomery, Wootton, Seneca Valley, and finally Roberto Clemente MS. Also, I have been a member of all three MCPS unions.

I am the son of two retired MCPS educators and the nephew of two amazing women who also retired from MCPS as SEIU members.

In summary, I am dedicated to loving children as an MCPS educator, it's in my blood.

However, even with my deeply rooted intrinsic motivation, the last several years tested my resolve and other dedicated educators in ways we never thought possible.

As we all know and felt, the COVID pandemic was an accelerant of challenging working conditions.

On our return to in-person instruction, we properly focused new efforts and resources on wellness. You may not realize the non-typical ways in which schools are supporting wellness. Allow me to share:

- Yesterday, I met with a parent to review her resume so she could prepare for a new job to support her family.
- The day before that a student in crisis returned to the school late at night, knowing that she would find safe adults, my staff and I returned to school to support her through her time of need.
- During this past holiday season our counselors collected and provided over 1,000 gifts for students to give to their family members.

I could go on with the many unique and forgotten ways we ask schools to support children but for time I will stop. The great tension with Wellness in education is that we expect schools to support everyone, everywhere all of the time, no matter the issue, but we tell stressed educators to take care of themselves.

Part of caring for us would include fully funding the MCPS proposed budget to ensure schools have the positions, resources, highly qualified people, and competitive compensation.

With the support and vision of our superintendent, Roberto Clemente Middle School has been working to accomplish the following:

End hate, bias, and racism.

This is not a lofty goal, this is not a long term vision, this is our real, daily goal. We aligned all of our activities, student groups, course offerings, lessons, adults, resources, and efforts to end racism every day.

Schools are tackling challenging, societal issues like this each day.

Beyond being proud of this work, I share this to demonstrate the complexity of working in schools these days. Clemente's educators are not unique, each school has a similar but different story to share. While it is challenging, we love it, we don't wish any of it away, but in truth it is very lonely. We could use your support

MOST IMPORTANTLY, TONIGHT, YOU CAN VOTE TO FULLY FUND THE SCHOOL SYSTEMS' PROPOSED BUDGET.

Working conditions are learning conditions and if we expect the greatest from our staff we must provide the greatest MCPS budget in history. Our Staff are worth it. Our children are worth it. And our community is worth it.

Thank you.